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->From the Editor’s Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"

What an excellent week for a vacation! Yes, my last vacation (in all likelihood) for this year is coming to an end. Finally, I had a week without rain and overcast days. We had some barbecues with friends, I relaxed, did some important errands, played some golf, and relaxed some more. And, for a change, I didn’t do any yardwork! And it’s a long weekend ahead due to the Labor Day holiday.

I am dreading going back to work, however. Lots of changes and other foolishness while I was away. My boss has left, a week ahead of plan. I guess being a "lame duck" has its drawbacks when carried to the extreme. I have no idea what the new hierarchy in the department will be. Heaven forbid I have to report to my former boss! I’ve already started sending out some "feeler" resumes in anticipation of the worst-case scenario within my department. Maybe it is time for a change...

Can you believe it? Unofficially, this is the last weekend of the summer! Where did the time go? So many things to do, never enough time... What can you do? But, since this is a long holiday weekend and the "end" of summer," many of you will be participating in those Labor Day weekend rites of passage: partying. Please remember, drink - don’t drive! Also remember that Labor Day means another rite: kids are going back to school. Watch out for them!

Until next time...

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->A-ONE User Group Notes! - Meetings, Shows, and Info!

Atari Swap Meet

Atari Swap Meet September 9, 2000
in Columbus OH (USA).

For more info and directions please go to http://acec.atari.org
I plan on being there with my Milan040 for all to abuse.

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING
compiled by Joe Mirando
jmirando@portone.com

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. Another week has come and gone and I find myself contemplating the weekend.... A LONG weekend.

With so much going on these days, it seems that there's never enough time to do everything that needs to be done. And even if there was, there would only be more crap to do to fill the time.

Isn't that the way it goes? No matter how much time you have, circumstances will provide more things to do than you could possibly accomplish.

Well, the same holds true in the computer industry. No matter how fast your CPU is, no matter what your RAM bus speed happens to be, someone will be out there writing programs that will slow it down to a crawl.

That's one of the reasons that I keep going back to my Atari computers. I can do almost anything I need to do without all the Active-GL, Open-X goop that bogs things down.

Of course, I'm of the opinion that Microsoft is to blame for most of it, but some of it isn't their fault. It's not easy for me to admit that, but there it is.

Being Atari folk, we've gotten used to NOT having the latest and greatest bells and whistles. Innovations, yes. But not the 'eye candy' that is so common in the computer world today.

There's something strange that happens to people when things become too easy or too pretty. They get lazy and stupid. I'm not quite sure of why this is, but you see it in every facet of our lives. Look at that kid you went to school with who's father gave him everything. What's he doing now? Five to ten? <grin>

I think that we do our best and grow the most only when we have to. Otherwise we get sluggish and slow. It's our nature to want something better, but it's our calling to make the most of what we've got.

Well, let's see what we've got in this week's batch of UseNet messages.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup
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Paul Nurminen asks about using a free ISP with STinG:

"I was wondering if anyone would care to try to get STinG to work with a free ISP I'm using on my _other_ computer (PC). By the way, as far as I

know, this is a North American ISP only (so far)...

The ISP is called "1 Nation Online". It's 100% free, with _NO AD BANNERS OF ANY KIND_. Plus, they don't require any special dialer or setup software (they do offer a dialer program as an option, but it's not required).

As far as I know, this is about the only free ISP left (in the USA) that doesn't make you look at ad banners while you're connected (there were two other free ISPs like this - one was called "FREEWWWEB", the other "WORLDSPY" - however, both were recently bought out by JUNO, which has the constant ad banners). Plus, 1 Nation Online doesn't block SMTP mail which is sent from an account _other than theirs_ (which is a rare thing to find in a free ISP!).

Anyway, I've tried various settings in STinG, and can get it to dial, and negotiate the connection, but then it hangs at the end. And according to the information I get from Windows dial up networking, it's a simple PPP connection using PAP. And I know PAP works with STinG since my current "pay for use" ISP uses it, and STinG works fine there. And I've tried it with a script too, but it gets through the login name and password, then hangs on getting the IP address.

If anyone wants to try it on a PC first, go to:

http://www.1nol.com

But for more thorough technical information about it, go to the following FREE ISP Resource site:

http://www.nzlist.org

* Here you will find a huge listing of free ISPs, and more importantly, all the necessary information on setting things up for 1 Nation Online - look for the 'Unofficial FAQ'."

Charles Silver tells Paul:

"Some might want to try www.freei.net or www.nocharge.com

I was using freewwweb also, but as you mentioned, it went South ;(I have freeinet working, but I got it going on my mac first, then imported the data to the falcon."

Krzystof Maj adds:

"Which version of STiNG do you use? We in Poland have had very like problem. Our national operator TPSA (Polish Telecom) started to install Nortels CVX internet access servers.

When connected to this server using STiNG, we were getting bombs exactly 90 seconds after beginning a telephone connection, i.e. 55 seconds after getting IP number. Until this moment a connection was always perfect, all functions were working normally. This effect appeared on versions 1.22 and 1.26. We have found that version 1.20 and the previous are free of this bug and work flawlessly with CVX servers.

When trying STiNG 1.20 be careful; you have to change *all* modules of Sting."

John Garone asks about using DSL on a Falcon:

"Anyone here know if a DSL connection is feasible on a stock Falcon? Earthlink is running a special saying a DSL modem is needed (looks like it’s free)."

Dennis Vermeire tells John:

"No way... You need a computer that can communicate through a fast ethernet card (Milan) and a stack that knows the POPoverEthernet protocol. There might be a solution for the ethernet card, but software wise there’s no stack on our platform which supports the POPoverEthernet stack."

John tells Dennis:

"I kinda’ figured a faster machine would be needed (at the very least)! I had hoped the connection could be sped up (even if I had to wait for the machine to process the data), especially since the Earthlink ad mentioned a free modem, etc. Thanks for the feedback anyway!"

Martin-Eric Racine adds his own thoughts:

"1) Not all cable-net and DSL providers want DHCP or POPoE; plain static IP is still possible in many places, as both myself (Finland) and SWE (Slovenia) prove.

2) Ethernet is also possible on MEGA-ST, MEGA-STE, TT, Hades.

Nowadays, there is even a ready-made cartridge adapter that works on a Falcon: http://www.asamnet.de/~hilgarte/ether.htm "

Robert Schaffner adds his own experiences with this cartridge:

"Yeah.. Works fine here since 4 weeks. Connects one falcon to two macintosh. FTP server/client. Great. Can’t find a better or faster way to transfer data from one to another machine, also CAB is surfing while data transfer works.."

’AtariGalen’ asks Robert:

"Could you describe your setup in more detail please?"

Robert replies:

"STinG Setup?

The urgent point is the route.tab, setting on ether_pa.stx (over STING PORT SETUP) .CPX. ether_pa is a new driver you got with the ethernet romport adaptor.

File transfer from falcon to mac / mac to falcon only works with FTP server/client software. Using aFTP on falcon. Fetch on Mac. Falcon also running an FTP server.

So I can connect the falcon from mac side via ftp. Click on files, transfer starts. Easy

That’s it. No more special settings."

Martin-Eric Racine asks Robert:

"Other protocols (e.g. http, irc, telnet) don’t work?"

Robert replies:

"They all work."

Andy Hewitt asks about using an ST for email:

"Hi there, I have only recently started nosing around here, but I have owned an Atari for the last 16 years. My first being an 800xl, then a 65XE.

I now have a 520STFM (2 in fact, but I’m only borrowing one of them). One of them is a 520STFM (TOS1.4) upgraded to 2.5mb and an internal HD floppy. The other is a fairly base 1mb 520 (TOS1.2), with a standard 800k drive. I also have an external 800k floppy too.

At the moment I have lent my Mum one of them to learn some basic word processing on (I have a selection, from First Word to Protext 6). As it is the only spare computer I have at the moment, I would like to get it setup for E-mail.

The needs are very simply, my Mum is not going to want any knobs and whistles, just the basics - type a message, send, receive, and reply will do.

Although I did an awful lot of work on the Atari, I never used it for communications, so I have no idea of how to go about this. I use the Mac for that myself.

Presuming I am going to need some connection software - PPP & TCP, and an E-mail client, I would like to know what would be best suited to the setups I have (preferably a 1mb ST with 2x 800 floppies), and where I could download the software.

It might be handy to have a basic browser too, if possible."

Lyndon Amsdon tells Andy:

"Right first thing you need is a modem (you didn’t mention if you had one). Standard ST modem port can only get up to 19.2K but that’ll be fine for emails.

First thing is I’m not sure if TOS 1.2 is up to it, maybe someone else can fill this in.

HSMODEM v.7 Cleans up the buggy serial port. Essential. From the package use MFP.PRG and DRVIN.PRG.

STING v1.26 PPP connection layer. Installation can be very tricky, so ask here for more help later on. You’ll need to sign up an account on your mac first and transport the details over to the ST.

XCONTROL v? Lets you use the CPXs (Control Panel eXtensions) for STING.

NEWSIE v0.94 or 0.96 Some people have had problems with 0.96 so best advice for beginner is to use 0.94. This is the email, FTP and

Newsgroup programme.

CAB v1.5 Web browser thats only HTML (no Java etc) works but very slow.

CAB.OVL v1.18 lets STING communicate with CAB.

On disk one create folder called AUTO and put in this order: DRVIN.PRG MFP.PRG STING.PRG Rename STING.APP to STING.ACC and put on the root of Disk one. Put XCONTROL on root as well and configure it to load the CPXs. Get everything working by putting in the details of your ISP into the STING.SCR and DEFAULT.CFG.

Now on Disk two put NEWSIE and CAB. Set up NEWSIE with your ISP username and password.

Download these packages of an FTP site or search about for them on the Net.

Hope that all helps, and remember, help is not that far away :-)

P.S. Docs are supplied for STING but are very daunting for a newcomer (especially if your just used to clicking on an install button and everything is done for you!)"

Martin Holmes asks about backup software:

"Can anyone suggest or recommend a reliable HD backup software utility - and where is it available from?"

Jim Logan tells Martin:

"Diamond Back is good to floppy or another HD partition. Still available from HiSoft as far as I know and quite cheap now.

If you want to backup to CDR then CD Writer Suite ver 3 from Anodyne Software."

Edward Baiz adds:

"I have used Diamond Back and it does a good job, but now I have switched to CDbackup from Anodyne. It works great and it is quick and easy. I recommend it."

Martin Byttebier adds:

"Diamond back is only good if one use the standard 8+3 FS. If one uses long filenames Diamond back is useless as it doesn’t support LF.

E-backup is suitable for long filenames but as far as I know it’s all German and not supported anymore."

Well folks, that’s it for this week. Tune in again next week, same time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - GameDaily Supports Thomas!
Bandai Enters Fray! JAMMA!
Sega Pushes Online Gaming!
And much, much more!

->From the Editor's Controller - Playin' it like it is!

I haven't had much to say editorially in this section for awhile. But, I have been following Don Thomas's "saga" with eGames (see further on in this section); and I wanted to throw in my couple of cents.

In my opinion, what eGames is doing is ripping off unsuspecting customers. And it's not only eGames that is doing this; I've personally had a similar experience which I intend to look into. When you're buying computer software and see something like "Atari Classics: Missile Command, Centipede, Asteroids, etc." - you expect to open up that CDROM, put it on your computer, and play these games - in their entirety. What you don't expect, especially where nowhere on the package does it say, to find these games with a small sampling of levels instead of the full version of the games.

If you're selling a collection of demos or crippled/partial games, say so! Do not lead your customers awry by misleading them into thinking they're buying complete games (or any other software for that matter!).

And then when said customer complains, the company treats him like an idiot. When the customer reacts to this treatment and wants to complain further, the company threatens to sue. Great for business, eGames! Not!

The company told Mr. Thomas that if he was unsatisfied, he could get a refund. This is supposed to resolve the issue? Bull. It's not just a matter of the purchase price. It's a matter of wrongly leading customers to buy a product which clearly are not full versions - clearly only once you use the software.

I can't wait to learn of the final outcome of this issue. I intend to send my comments in to eGames, as well. Most consumers would just chalk the issue up to experience and never say a word, feeling it wasn't worth the effort, that it was only ten bucks or so. And I might agree with you. But, it's wonderful to see that there are people out there who do not believe what happened to them was right; and they're doing something about it! Good for you, Don!

Until next time...

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!

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Japan’s Bandai To Launch New Handheld Game Player

Bandai Co Ltd , a major Japanese toy maker, said on Monday it will launch a new handheld game machine in December with a color liquid crystal display to compete with Nintendo Co Ltd’s Gameboy.

The news comes less than a week after Nintendo unveiled last Thursday a new version of the popular Gameboy to be launched next March 21 in Japan, with shipments in the first month targeted at one million units.

A Bandai spokeswoman said Square Co Ltd , a major Japanese game software developer, will provide a version of its popular Final Fantasy game series for Bandai’s new game player.

Bandai set a sales target for the new machine of 1.2 million units by the end of March 2001, the spokeswoman said.

The domestic sale price is expected to be 7,000 yen, compared with the new Gameboy’s list price of 9,800 yen.

The new portable machine, like Bandai’s current monochrome WonderSwan game player, will allow users to access the Internet by connecting the unit to a mobile phone.

Other details will be disclosed at a news briefing on August 30, the spokeswoman said.

Sega Aims High with Online Gaming

Sega, maker of the popular, year-old gaming console Dreamcast, is enticing users to give online gaming via its SegaNet a try. The company said on Thursday it is cutting the price of the Dreamcast console and will give customers a $150 rebate if they sign up for 18 months of SegaNet service at $21.95 for each month.

Sega, which has been fighting an uphill battle against Sony’s PlayStation for some time, wants to get a jump on the competition in the online gaming arena.

But first, Sega has to exorcise a colossal flop from early 1999 -- its Saturn console. Game developers flocked to write games for rival consoles and Sega’s market share had dwindled to a miserable one-half of 1 percent.

‘‘We broke our promise to gamers," said Peter Moore, president and chief operating officer of Sega America Inc., the U.S. unit of Japanese Sega Enterprises Ltd. ‘‘Frankly, it was a debacle and all we had to show at that point was a great history."

Fast-forward to summer that same year.

Sega staffers infiltrated a golf tournament Sony hosted for game developers and publishers in the San Francisco Bay Area and convinced the golf pro to

replace the Sony-emblazoned golf balls with those from Sega. They hired a plane trailing a Sega banner to buzz the golf course. Then there was the giant blue hedgehog -- Sonic, a Sega character -- screaming down fairways in a golf cart.

Then there was the vastly successful launch of the Sega Dreamcast console Sept. 9, 1999. In the first 24 hours on sale, Sega sold $97 million of hardware, software and peripheral devices, Moore said.

With an installed base now of 2.1 million and market share of about 15 percent, San Francisco-based Sega America is pinning its continued comeback on SegaNet, a private online gaming network that goes live Sept. 7. Also an Internet service provider, Sega hopes that hard-core users, as well as new ones, will replace their existing ISP with the dial-up SegaNet service that allows Web surfing and e-mail.

‘‘It’s a great idea and Sega actually has a tremendous opportunity -- out of all the console game makers, to set the tone for everyone else that, ’Hey, online gaming is easy, online gaming is fun and online gaming is where it’s at,"’ said senior analyst P.J. McNealy at Gartner Group, who has seen a demonstration of SegaNet.

‘‘But they’re also between a rock and a hard place because PlayStation 2 is coming out this fall and that thing already has noise that Sega has to fight," McNealy said.

In addition to the wildly popular PlayStation -- more than 70 million have been sold so far, McNealy said -- Nintendo Co. Ltd. comes out next year with its Dolphin console and Microsoft Corp.’s highly touted X-Box hits shelves around the same time.

So far, analysts believe online gaming will be big. Really big. At just 2 percent of the gaming market now, market research firm Forrester Research predicts online gaming will reach 24 percent of video game market sales in the next two years. That’s not exactly chump change for an industry that was within spitting distance last year of surpassing the movie industry in revenue, with some $7 billion in the North American market alone.

To entice users to give online gaming via SegaNet a try, the price of the Dreamcast console will be reduced to $149 and Sega will give customers a $150 rebate if they sign up for 18 months of SegaNet service at $21.95 per month. Users also get a free keyboard allowing them to chat online while playing and to surf the Web and write e-mail.

Because online gaming over the public Internet has proved to be less than an ideal experience due to traffic and bouncing from server to server, Sega will offer 50 free hours of SegaNet service with every Dreamcast sold.

Other console makers, such as No. 1 Sony and Nintendo have said they will wait until high-speed Internet access to the home is far more prevalent than it is now, which is at just about three million homes in the United States having either a cable or DSL modem.

But Sega’s Moore said his company will have the jump on online gaming because the company is using what is currently widely available -- dial-up access -- and has made sure that it works. Since the game runs on the console, the amount of data that has to go through a 56K modem is relatively small, Moore said.

‘‘The console is rock solid at 60 frames a second running at 28.8

(kilobytes per second)," he said. ‘‘We are not going to hang around for three or four years to wait for broadband, but when it’s there, we’re ready to go."

The biggest danger about SegaNet and Sega’s strategy, McNealy said, was if users do not take advantage of SegaNet and their first experience of online console gaming is a herky-jerky experience on the public Internet. ‘‘That could be a potential disaster," McNealy said.

But with the next version of its football game ‘‘Sega Sports NFL 2K1" on the way (it allows people to play against each other online) and the launch of SegaNet, Sega might just have a reasonable shot at a full comeback.

Asked if Sega could really, really come back, McNealy replied: ‘‘Only if they do this online thing right. The only other thing they can hope for is if Sony stumbles with PlayStation 2, then people may turn to Dreamcast."

Activision’s Star Trek Invasion Warps Onto Store Shelves Nationwide

Gamers, prepare to ‘‘lock and load" for intergalactic combat when Activision, Inc. releases Star Trek Invasion, the first Star Trek game for the PlayStation game console. The high-action space-combat game will be available at retail channels across North America the week of August 28, 2000 and carries a suggested retail price of $39.95.

Based on the Star Trek: The Next Generation universe, Star Trek Invasion places gamers in control of the Federation’s prototype single-pilot ships. The game challenges players to investigate strange space anomalies, defend the Federation against alien threats, and uncover the mystery that has opened a rift in the Beta Quadrant.

‘‘Star Trek is one of the world’s most recognized brands and we are thrilled to bring such an important franchise to the PlayStation game console," said Michael Pole, executive vice president, Activision Worldwide Studios. ‘‘With such stellar gameplay, Star Trek Invasion is sure to appeal to a large audience including casual and hardcore gamers, as well as Star Trek fans."

Developed by Warthog plc, Star Trek Invasion draws players into a realistic and visually stunning 3D space-combat adventure. Under the guidance of Lt. Commander Worf, players undertake 30 diverse missions with a multitude of objectives requiring them to employ evasion, stealth, preservation and pursuit tactics to defend the Federation from a mysterious menace. As gamers progress through the missions, they will pilot multiple types of vessels, including taking the hot-seat of a pulse-blasting ion cannon turret, as they interact with classic Star Trek races, as well as a never before seen alien race. Additionally, the game features over 10 unique weapons, including morning-stars and gravity bombs, an immersive storyline, true squad AI, and an all new advanced graphics engine that allows for in-game streaming video, stunning graphics and explosive special effects.

For the first time, space combat gamers will be able to compete in dual-play matches via split-screen, that take place in five Holospace combat arenas. In dual-play, players have the option to fly in tandem in cooperative team-play or engage in head-to-head combat.

Star Trek Invasion has been rated ‘‘E" (‘‘Everyone" - content suitable for person ages six and older) by the ESRB.

Mattel Interactive Brings Radio-Controlled Racing to PlayStation

Mattel Interactive announced the availability of its first Tyco R/C title for the PlayStation game console, Tyco R/C Assault with a Battery. Following its tradition of publishing high quality racing titles, Mattel Interactive brings one of its most popular brands to life with high action racing excitement. Tyco R/C Assault with a Battery is the first Tyco R/C title in a new series of Mattel Interactive games and will be available in retail stores nationwide.

‘‘Continuing Mattel Interactive’s effort to broaden its offering of titles to boys of all ages, we are excited to bring one of Mattel’s most recognizable brands to the PlayStation console," said Bernard Stolar, president of Mattel Interactive. ‘‘Players can now experience the excitement of radio-controlled racing and control their favorite Tyco R/C vehicles with Tyco R/C Assault with a Battery."

Tyco R/C Assault with a Battery puts players in control of some of the best-selling, high-performance radio-controlled racing vehicles including Super Rebound, Hot Rocker and Nitro Dozer. Gamers use secret moves to unlock each vehicle’s special power to tear through a variety of challenging terrain and obstacles. Players utilize each vehicle’s unique abilities to shock, flip, blast, zap and shrink other vehicles off the track. Racers can play single or multiplayer and select from five modes including battle and championship mode and from five richly detailed 3D environments.

Acclaim Sports Tackles All-New Terrain With ATV: Quad Power Racing, Available In Stores Today

Acclaim Sports announced ATV: Quad Power Racing, the first ATV-based videogame for the PlayStation game console, is now available at retail across the country.

ATV: Quad Power Racing features 12 outdoor tracks with mountain, snow and desert terrain. Tracks are complete with obstacles, short cuts and jumps on circuit-based and natural layouts. Players can choose from 6 quad riders and 12 quad bikes, each with four wheel independent suspension and its own individual specifications including top speed, suspension and grip. Exciting arcade gameplay enables quads to power slide, roll-over, crash and display damage from physical action between competing riders.

In addition, ATV: Quad Power Racing features 4 gameplay modes: Single Race; Time Attack; 2-Player; and Championship Mode. Players choose to race as either Amateur or Pro and will gain access to additional circuits as they win championships.

ATV: Quad Power Racing is being developed by European based Climax Studio and will carry a suggested retail price of $29.99.

The Most Anticipated BMX Video Game, Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX, to Hit Retailers On Thursday, September 14th

Hottest BMX Game Features: 10 BMX Superstars, 1,300 BMX Tricks, 12 Levels, Killer Soundtrack, and Motion-captured Moves

Acclaim Max Sports announced that the highly anticipated Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX video game for the PlayStation game console will be available in retail outlets nationwide on Thursday, September 14th.

‘‘We believe this game will be one of the best-selling PlayStation games this year. Many people have worked extremely hard, especially our developer, Z-Axis, to bring the most anticipated BMX game to the market and we know it will not disappoint," stated Steve Felsen, brand director of Acclaim Max Sports.

‘‘I am very stoked that the game is coming out. Being a gamer myself, I worked real hard with Acclaim to make sure this game is authentic to BMX and totally fun to play," commented Dave Mirra, who recently won the gold medal in the X Games Street Competition, making him the most decorated athlete in X Games history.

Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX focuses the aggressive spirit and tremendous energy of BMX riding into an accessible, trick-based action game for the PlayStationfi game console. Riders are given an open track, a set of tricks, a bike, and the rest is up to them. The challenge: Take their rider from zero to hero in their very own freestyle BMX career.

Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX, developed by Z-Axis, features: 10-Time World Champion Dave Mirra, along with nine other BMX superstars (Ryan Nyquist, Leigh Ramsdell, Mike Laird, Troy McMurray, Kenan Harkin, Joey Garcia, Shaun Butler, Chad Kagy and Tim Mirra); an innovative open trick system with over 1,300 possible BMX tricks; 12 interactive environments, 6 competition-based and 6 objective-based levels focused on vert, dirt and street riding; soundtrack featuring Sublime’s ‘‘What I Got," Cypress Hill’s ‘‘Dust," Rancid’s ‘‘Maxwell Murder," Social Distortion’s ‘‘Don’t Drag Me Down," Deftones’ ‘‘Be Quiet and Drive (far away)," Primer’s ‘‘Loose," Pennywise’s ‘‘Greed," Dropkick Murphys’ ‘‘Never Alone," 59 Times the Pain’s ‘‘Got It All In Sight" and Swingin’ Utters’ ‘‘Stupid Lullabies;" and the first BMX video game to have authentic BMX tricks motion-captured by Dave Mirra and Ryan Nyquist.

Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX is backed by a five month nationwide television, print and online campaign; a dedicated website on www.acclaimmaxsports.com; a comprehensive in-store merchandising program, including pre-sell video, window posters, valence cards and comp boxes; and cross-promotions with Slim Jim, UGP, Dog on a Bike Films, and Split.

EA Breaks Out of the Ring With WCW Backstage Assault for the PlayStation and Nintendo 64

Bring it... backstage and out-of-the-ring. Chaos reigns supreme as EA breaks out of the ring with WCW Backstage Assault, the latest World

Championship Wrestling (WCW) title licensed to EA by 4Kids Entertainment Inc. The fast, action-packed game will feature over 50 of the hottest WCW superstars, including Goldberg, Sting and Vampiro, in an all-out assault. WCW Backstage Assault for the PlayStation and Nintendo 64 will ship late Fall 2000 and marks the first ever entirely out-of-the-ring wrestling game to date.

‘‘Being the first company to offer an out-of-the-ring feature as we did last year with WCW Mayhem, it was a natural decision for us to create a completely interactive backstage wrestling experience," says Dean Elissat, product manager at Electronic Arts (‘‘EA"). ‘‘We’re preserving all of the physics and gameplay mechanics of traditional wrestling, but adding many unique features and challenges that are presented in non-traditional settings."

Wrestling fans will have the ability to brawl in seven different interactive out-of-the-ring environments, each with up to three connecting rooms. Inside each room will be an assortment of items (lead pipes, 2x4s, bathroom sinks, etc.) and environmental hazards (fire, steam, sparks, etc.) that can be used to rock your opponent’s world. The days of being confined to a conventional wrestling ring are over -- players will finally have the freedom to battle their opponents in fully interactive 3D environments that act as a ring. For example, players can bounce off the rubber tires as if they were ropes in ‘‘The Loading Bay" area or jump off crate boxes as if they were turnbuckles in the ‘‘Semi Truck Arena." In addition, special weapons and power-ups can be unlocked through a comprehensive reward system as player’s skill levels and progress increase.

Skills are put to the ultimate test in the ‘‘Hardcore Challenge" mode, where players are given the opportunity to compete for three WCW championships: Hardcore, U.S. and World title. Win the Hardcore belt and try grabbing a spot in the Hall of Champions. Earning a ranking in the elite Hall of Champions will be based on four performance factors: number of matches won, title earned, numbers of replays used and attack style points. Be crowned the ultimate champion using your favorite WCW wrestler or customize your own superstar using the robust ‘‘Create-A-Wrestler" function to win the coveted belt. Either way, it’ll all come down to a free-for-all where players will have to do whatever it takes to survive the assault.

Fun And Games with Racers, Army Men, Flintstones

"RC Revenge," the $40 PlayStation game from Acclaim, lets you race through a haunted mansion, a jungle trail, a space station and other theme-based tracks.

It doesn’t have a madhouse, but when you are pitted against seven other little radio-controlled (RC) cars or boats, every race itself is a madhouse anyway.

RC racing games are an example of how a computer can produce a better experience than the real thing. Unlike real RC racing, these games give you a driver’s-eye view of the action. You can recover from a tip-over with the touch of a button, you don’t have to worry about any serious (or expensive) damage to your car and -- for drivers who enjoy making mischief -- there are a host of ‘‘powerups" to make the other racers lives miserable.

For example, you can release bombs to blast cars behind you, shoot a burning ring of fire that blows your competition out of the way, or fire rockets to immolate any cars in front of you. The damage is temporary, but if you get hit, it can be enough to bump you from first to last place in the blink of an eye.

The racing action is so fast and the competition is so fierce, I found it hard to pay attention to the powerups, never mind finding the time to use them. There are about 20 tracks, most of which you cannot unlock until you have won some competitions, with names such as ‘‘I Know What You Drove Last Summer" (the horror theme), ‘‘Cars Attacks!" and ‘‘20:1 A Space Odd RC" (the science fiction theme), ‘‘Attack of the Killer Toy Motor" (the monster theme) and ‘‘Races of the Lost Park" and "Temple of Vroom" (the jungle theme).

If you don’t like any of these, ‘‘RC Revenge" allows you to create your own tracks. With the multi-player feature, you can race against a friend.

It’s a fine way to get your mind off the fact that summer is winding down.

‘‘Army Men Air Combat" may also feature little toys in a full-sized world, but this $40 Nintendo 64 combat game from 3DO doesn’t have the same innocent charm of ‘‘RC Revenge."

Perhaps it’s the Napalm bombs and the screams of dying men that give this game the edgy feel of a real-life battle helicopter simulation instead of a child’s backyard game involving a bunch of plastic toy soldiers.

Yet it certainly has its charms. Your enemies include bumble bees and kids with magnifying glasses, and you have to love a game where you can drop an apple or a rock on a target, or use food to entice ants into harassing your enemy.

There are 16 single-player missions, another 16 dual-player missions in which both players need to cooperate, and eight games where four people can go head to head.

Unfortunately, you observe the action from such a high vantage point, it’s often difficult to see who is shooting at you. ‘‘Army Men Air Combat" would be more effective if you could adjust the view to see more of the terrain in front of you, the way a real chopper pilot can.

Also, the mission briefings are static, text-only affairs, which is disappointing.

‘‘The Flintstones Bedrock Bowling" suggests that this PlayStation game is a bowling simulation. Far from it. It’s essentially a downhill racing game where the only relevance to bowling is the requirement to knock down bowling pins scattered along the track.

The premise of this game, which SouthPeak Interactive will release in October, is that Fred’s boss, Mr. Slate, has forced Fred to work overtime, even though he and Barney need to practice for an upcoming bowling tournament. Enter Gazoo, a green-skinned floating space alien. He magically creates the trenches that Mr. Slate wanted dug and turns them into ‘‘bowling lanes," where players ride hollowed-out bowling

balls along the tracks, picking up gems, whacking pins and trying to avoid explosives, monsters, tar patches, and volcanoes. (With the trenches dug, I wondered why Fred and Barney didn't just go to the bowling alley.)

There are 10 lanes plus three bonus lanes. At $40, that's about $3 per lane, which is a bit pricey, even for a PlayStation game. There are three levels of difficulty. ''Easy" is like bumper bowling; it's difficult to fall off the track, the equivalent of bowling a gutter ball. On the ''Medium" level, many of the invisible guard rails disappear and if you fall off the track too many times, you must go on to the next track. With the game set on ''Hard," falling off the same track twice is enough to end the game completely.

In the end, ''Bedrock Bowling" is an all-too-conventional children's arcade game. The voices of Fred, Barney, Pebbles, Bamm-Bamm and Dino are true to the original TV show. The voice for Gazoo is provided by comic actor Harvey Korman, who gives the little space alien an over-the-top quality that makes him sound like a snooty Englishman. I never realized that the British empire went back to the age of the dinosaurs.

Renowned Volleyball Player Gabby Reece to Appear in Infogrames' Power Spike Pro Beach Volleyball

Infogrames announced Monday that its beach volleyball game, Power Spike Pro Beach Volleyball (working title) for the PlayStation game console and the Nintendo Game Boy Color, will feature volleyball star Gabby Reece. Reece will appear as a playable character in the game, in addition to appearing on the game's box front and in advertisements. Power Spike Pro Beach Volleyball is developed by Carapace and will be available this fall.

''We are very proud to have Gabby Reece, an international superstar volleyball player, endorse Power Spike Pro Beach Volleyball," said Laddie Ervin, director of marketing for sports & racing at Infogrames. ''Power Spike Pro Beach Volleyball is the ultimate beach volleyball game, so it makes perfect sense that the ultimate beach volleyball icon should be featured in the game."

Gabrielle, or ''Gabby" Reece, as she is affectionately known, will appear as a character within Power Spike Pro Beach Volleyball. Players of the game will have the opportunity to play as or against the Gabby Reece character. Reece will also appear in print advertisements promoting the game and will be featured prominently on the game's box front.

Reece attended Florida State where she set season records for solo and total blocks, and as a junior in 1990, was named the nation's Most Inspiring Collegiate Athlete. As a professional volleyball player, she has competed in five seasons on the four-person beach tour, where she has twice been named the tour's Top Offensive Player.

Reece competed in the WBVL (4 on 4 beach circuit) for six seasons from 1992-1997. Reece spent five seasons as a team captain and led the league in kills during the 1993-1996 seasons and in blocks in the 1993 season. She also holds the record for kills per match (11.9) set in 1994 and 1996. Reece co-authored a book with Karen Karbo about her life as a pro beach volleyball player called Big Girl in the Middle and also wrote a column for Women's Sports and Fitness magazine. In 1997, Reece married extreme surfer

Laird Hamilton.

Power Spike Pro Beach Volleyball has a highly realistic beach volleyball atmosphere with more than 45 licensed male and female volleyball players in the PlayStation version, and 20 players to choose from in the Game Boy Color version. Gamers can play on beaches in exotic locations including Rio De Janeiro, Osaka, Acapulco, Sydney and more. The PlayStation version will offer players the option to create and edit their own beach pro, while the Game Boy Color version will offer multi-player via the link cable mode.

Soup Up Your Ride in Sega's First Customizable Racing Game -- Sega GT for Dreamcast

Think you can build the ultimate GT roadster? Prove it! Sega Tuesday introduced ''Sega GT" for the 128-bit, Internet-ready Sega Dreamcast videogame console. In ''Sega GT," players can tweak and race over 130 high-performance GT sports cars, or design their very own racecars from scratch, then hit the track for a high-speed showdown. The first customizable car racing game for Dreamcast, ''Sega GT" is available at retail stores nationwide this month.

In ''Sega GT," players can create and race their dream machines in the Car Workshop, but choosing the right combination of parts from the factory is key to winning races. With more than 2 million possible car-part-combinations, players must decide whether a 19-inch magnesium wheel is the best way to make the car corner like it's on rails, or whether intimidating the competition with a blast from a big muffler is the way to go. After trying out their creations at the track, players can use Dreamcast's Visual Memory Unit (VMU) to upload lap times and trade racing machines with other players over the Internet.

'''Sega GT' takes racing games to the next level, offering gamers a unique experience every time they play," said Rich Briggs, product manager for Sega of America. ''With car customization and Internet elements, 'Sega GT' offers extensive replayability and adrenaline-packed fun for racing enthusiasts and casual gamers alike, making it the most realistic driving simulation ever."

Players looking for a quick racing fix can choose from an expansive selection of perfectly rendered GT cars to race, including 2000 models like the one-of-a-kind Dodge Viper GTS/R concept car, the Ford Cobra and the Mitsubishi GTO Twin Turbo. From the classics to the 2000 models, all of the cars were reproduced using exact manufacturer specifications to deliver the look, handling and performance of their real life counterparts.

''Sega GT" players can tear it up in five racing seasons on over 20 different challenging tracks. Additional game features like split-screen head-to-head mode and instant replay offer an added bonus to the excitement of ''Sega GT."

''Sega GT" is available in stores now at a suggested retail price of $39.99. ''Sega GT" is rated E for Everyone.

LodgeNet Brings Mario Tennis to Hotel Guests Nationwide; New N64 Game Will Appear in

Stores, Hotel Rooms Same Week

Thanks to an exclusive agreement between LodgeNet Entertainment Corporation and Nintendo of America Inc., video game fans in more than 162,000 hotel rooms can enjoy a new Nintendo 64 game the same week it hits shelves at consumer retail outlets. Through its interactive television systems, LodgeNet will begin offering Mario Tennis to guests on September 1 -- just four days after the game’s August 28 retail release.

Mario Tennis allows up to four players to challenge Mario and more than a dozen of his friends to perfect matches of tennis, practice sets, tournaments, challenge modes and more in singles and doubles play. Each character possesses unique attributes of power, speed, spin and control. They can also play on varied court surfaces, including clay and grass, which causes the ball to react differently depending on each surface. Mario Tennis also introduces players to Waluigi, Luigi’s archenemy and the latest character addition to the Nintendo family.

‘‘By offering Mario Tennis now we’ll capitalize on the heightened interest in tennis during the U.S. Open, and we’ll provide Labor Day travelers with a game that’s literally right out of the box," says Steven D. Truckenmiller, Vice President Guest Pay Services for LodgeNet. ‘‘This rollout reflects both the strength of our relationship with Nintendo and the capacity to update our interactive digital systems with fresh content virtually overnight." LodgeNet was the first lodging industry distributor of Nintendo 64 games and currently provides them to more than 1,000 hotels.

‘‘We are thrilled to offer the simultaneous release of Mario Tennis at retail and in LodgeNet hotels," says Peter Eck, Nintendo’s director, network planning. ‘‘The launch is a great testament to LodgeNet’s hotel technology providing guests the very latest in interactive entertainment. The ability to quickly update hotel video games concurrently also illustrates the advanced capabilities of the LodgeNet hotel entertainment system and reaffirms our decision to partner with LodgeNet."

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->A-ONE Gaming Online - Online Users Growl & Purr!
"""""""""""""""""""""

Jaguar JAMMA Joysticks On Sale Now!

Hello everyone,

I was on vacation the past week and forgot to send this before I left. This is the most recent news article from the GOAT Store...

August 18, 2000 - Jaguar JAMMA Joystick LX Released

The GOAT Store’s official modification to the popular Jaguar JAMMA Joystick

is officially ready for sale through the GOAT Stores website (www.goatstore.com). The Jaguar JAMMA Joystick LX is the second version of the original Jaguar JAMMA Joystick that sports a larger base, as well as a modified button configuration.

Unfortunately, the GOAT Stores website does not currently have any pictures of the Jaguar JAMMA Joystick LX, but they are hoping to get some by the end of the month. The Jaguar JAMMA Joystick LXs price has been set at $74.90 and comes in a variety of colors. Please direct any questions to The GOAT (thegoat@goatstore.com).

Enjoy!

dan
www.goatstore.com

Open Letter to Editors of GameDaily for Story Run in August 29, 2000 Issue.

Dear GameDaily,

Thank you for your reporting on the issue (http://www.icwhen.com/news/egames0822a.html) concerning eGames' marketing decision to sell abridged video game titles without appropriate package labeling. Please allow me to reply to Mr. Klein's response that was printed in the August 29, 2000 issue of GameDaily Newsletter:

>> The press release that was attached to your recent
>> email to me was a press release drafted by Donald
>> Thomas and posted on his website. The release was
>> written so that it was unclear whether it originated
>> from eGames or from a news source.

ICWhen.com (www.icwhen.com <http://www.icwhen.com/>), as humble as it has been over the years, has reported classic gaming-related news for years. The release in question here was clearly marked as of its origin and Mr. Klein's assertion that the story was intended to sound like eGames released it is nothing short of silly.

>> Mr. Thomas' press release contained several
>> misrepresentations of facts and quotes attributed to me.

From the beginning of this issue, I posted the entire customer-company exchange. It can be found at: http://www.icwhen.com/news/egames0822.html. The communication thread eliminates any possibility that I misrepresented or misquoted anyone. Although I would not normally publicly post email exchanges, Mr. Klein was firm that his information was a standard policy with dealing with the public. His unequivocal interest to sue me for filing a complaint with the Office of the Attorney General unquestionably affirms his willingness to enter all correspondence into public record. At no time did Mr. Klein indicate that he was sharing confidential information with me and every communication each way openly copied other parties. They were never private.

>> This is a summary of the exchange that occurred between
>> eGames and Mr. Thomas before his press release was picked
>> up by GameDaily. On Monday, August 21, 2000, Mr. Thomas, Jr.

>> wrote to me that he had purchased Galaxy of Arcade Classics
>> and that after playing Tunnel Blaster, the game ended
>> abruptly and as he exited the game he was informed that he
>> was the proud owner of a demo version of Tunnel Blaster, not
>> the full game.

This is essentially true. I wrote to a number of eGames personnel and Mr. Klein replied. I told eGames that I played Tunnel Blaster for about 15 minutes. When Level 7 ended, I readied for level 8, but the game abruptly ended and said something similar to 'Game Over'. I know that Tunnel Blaster, when sold separately, does not end that early in the game play. My experience in the industry is that a significantly abridged version of a game is a 'playable demo' by definition. It sounded like Mr. Klein was not aware that playable demos are frequently the first few levels of a full game so I made my assertion more clear in my second communication with him.

By the way, as you exit Mr. Klein's software, it invites you to purchase the 'premium version'. Based on my observations, the 'Premium Version' is the complete version that the consumer is led to believe he is getting when purchasing 'Galaxy of Arcade Games' in the first place.

>> I wrote to Mr. Thomas and informed him that (1.) despite
>> relentless testing we could not duplicate the message that
>> he reported

Mr. Klein is playing with semantics. I stated only that the software implicitly stated it was a demo within context by ending early and promoting a more complete version to be purchased separately as you exited the software. I did not mean to say that the software actually used the word 'demo' on screen. I know he knows this because I made it clearer in later communications that he acknowledged.

I can see why Mr. Klein might be concerned about his software stating 'playable demo' since he wants consumers to believe that these are the fully playable versions that they thought they purchased. I'll even admit that many of eGames target market may not realize how their initial purchase of $9.99 is intended to actually cost $115 if the customer were to buy the complete version of all seven titles found on the disc. This is an excellent marketing tactic IF the consumer is told in advance that the individual games will only provide 15 to 20 minutes of game play before they are reasonably mastered. You cannot promise a car for sale then tell the customer they have to buy the gas tank separately after they pay for the car. It doesn't matter that the car may operate for a while anyway.

>> (2.) Galaxy of Arcade Classics includes many games of
>> varying levels and none of the games are demo versions
>> that either time out, are crippled, or disabled and

'Galaxy of Games' states that there are seven games on the disk. All seven are previously released titles as best that I can tell and are sold by the same names as individual titles. When purchased individually, the software plays and feels like compete games. On 'Galaxy of Arcade Games', the levels are much shorter (fewer levels, much fewer). The packaging never reveals that any of the games are greatly abridged versions. Please notice that Mr. Klein wishes to dwell on the fact that these abridged versions are not in themselves crippled or disabled, but he does not wish to dwell on the fact that these are greatly abridged editions of software sold by the same name separately. It is not appropriate to promise a selection of songs on an audio CD, then end them all after just 30 seconds of playing them instead of delivering the full versions UNLESS the package is marked appropriately.

>> (3.) we would either replace the product or refund the
>> amount of his purchase at his discretion. Mr. Thomas
>> was unsatisfied with our response,

This is sort of true. Mr. Klein did offer me a refund. He may have offered to replace the product (I don't remember that), but I fail to understand how that may have changed my position by getting the same software back. He also stated that by offering refunds, his company expects to avoid Attorney General inquiries because, ultimately, no one is financially harmed.

He advised me that eGame's refund procedure is a formal policy. Nowhere on the packaging does it let customers know that such a policy exists much less how to file a claim for it. Therefore, the consumer never learns of this policy unless they go to the unusual effort to look up how to reach eGames and, presumably, invest the time and money to send in the software for the refund.

>> although it was unclear from his correspondence whether
>> he was simply seeking a refund or just wanted to generate
>> additional responses.

Believe it or not, I actually expected that Mr. Klein might thank me as a customer for having thought enough of his product to have purchased it. I openly admit that I initially expected eGames to replace the product with the full versions that I was led to believe I had purchased in the first place. I would have been happy, I think, with just one or two of the full versions. Instead, Mr. Klein elected to argue that it is acceptable not to notify a customer when a game title is not the complete version sold elsewhere. When I suggested that we consult with an Office of an Attorney General, Mr. Klein stated that his refund policy offsets any misunderstandings caused by incorrect packaging.

When I sent a formal inquiry to the Office of the Attorney General of California, I copied Mr. Klein as a courtesy so he could respond to my comments proactively. Mr. Klein then conveniently failed to remove my email address in a message to his advisors stating that he was arguing with a fool and that he wanted to file a lawsuit against me. Even if that was done in error or in jest, it reflects Mr. Klein's true feelings in the matter and shows a lack of care to prevent a customer from encountering such an experience with his company.

>> We continue to stand behind our products and the value
>> that they deliver. Our game collections provide a wide
>> variety of software games that are fun to play, and are
>> free from violent or offensive content. We take customer
>> complaints seriously and as always we offer a money-back
>> guarantee of satisfaction.

Here is how seriously Mr. Klein takes customer complaints. This quote is from his final email to me for which he has not apologized or attempted to correct.

'PS - I think it's best if we wait and see what develops. Mr. Thomas obviously has a mission here and short of revamping our marketing and product development strategies, he's not about to appeased. Ellen, are you sure we can't sue him?'

I have submitted this situation to the Attorneys General of California and of Pennsylvania. I have dropped any expectation to receive the complete

software advertised on the packaging of 'Galaxy of Arcade Games'. My only desire is to have eGames acknowledge that they cannot offer games that have been abridged without telling the consumer in advance regardless if they call them demos or not. 'Galaxy of Arcade Games' is essentially a catalog of playable eGames software demos in my view. The games are too short to be enjoyed for any length of time and the consumer is encouraged to spend more money to acquire what they thought they were getting originally. In my view this is wrong since the consumer is not told this in advance of their purchase.

I specifically invite GameDaily to look into this situation and I will openly apologize for any errors I have made in my assertions against eGames. I suspect that GameDaily will have to agree that 'Galaxy of Games' does not inform consumers they are not purchasing the full versions of the games on the packaging.

This full story can be found at:
http://www.icwhen.com/news/egames0822a.html.

Best Wishes,

-- Donald A. Thomas, Jr.
curator@icwhen.com <mailto:curator@icwhen.com>
http://www.icwhen.com <http://www.icwhen.com/>
Yahoo: DATJ - ICQ: 14183819

--- original story found in August 29, 2000 GameDaily newsletter ---
See www.gamedaily.com <http://www.gamedaily.com/>

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Tech Giants Weigh in on Napster Controversy

Trade groups representing some technology giants filed briefs on Monday to a federal appeals court expressing concerns about an injunction issued last month by a U.S. District court against song-swap company Napster Inc.

''About six friend-of-the court briefs are being filed. These groups had until the end of today," said a spokeswoman for controversial song-swap company Napster Inc. She added that several groups had also filed briefs late last week.

The Recording Industry Association of America's (RIAA) landmark lawsuit against Napster is on a fast legal track since the appeals court last month granted Napster a last-minute reprieve by staying U.S. District Court Judge Marilyn Patel's injunction order against the service with over 20 million users.

While the reprieve was seen as a blow to the recording industry, many lawyers say the law is on the industry's side.

But in filing these ''friend-of-the-court" briefs, several groups like the Computer & Communications Industry Association (CCIA), which represents technology giants like AT&T Corp., Oracle Corp. and Yahoo Inc., said the courts need to reinterpret and revise some of the models for intellectual property protection.

''There is a lot of need for intellectual property protection but we have many instances in the industry where people are trying to overprotect to the disadvantage of the public and to legitimate businesses trying to compete," Ed Black, president of the CCIA, told Reuters on Monday.

Redwood City, Calif.-based Napster's service lets fans swap songs for free by trading MP3 files, a compression format that turns music on compact discs into small computer files.

The RIAA, which represents big record companies, like Seagram Co. Ltd.'s Universal Music, Bertelsmann AG's BMG, Sony Corp.'s Sony Music and Time Warner Inc.'s Warner Music Group and EMI, has claimed that Napster facilitates piracy.

The CCIA said it joined with others in the technology community in filing two amicus curiae briefs in the Napster case before the Federal Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. CCIA filed two briefs, one jointly with the Consumer Electronics Association (CEA) and the Digital Future Coalition (DFC), Black said.

While not taking a position on Napster's potential liability as a contributory or vicarious copyright infringer, the briefs argue that the lower District Court misapplied and misinterpreted several key provisions of Federal copyright law and Supreme Court precedent, the CCIA said in a release issued Friday.

''There is tremendous public value in people having reasonable access to a wide range of products and technology," Black said.

Napster on August 18 asked the appeals court to overturn Patel's July 26 order that Napster stop users from trading copyrighted songs, virtually pulling the plug on the service.

The briefs by several coalitions expressed concerns the ruling could limit users' rights to enjoy music and media and could impose copyright policing responsibilities on Internet service providers.

''We are hopeful that the Ninth Circuit will recognize the errors in the District Court's reasoning and send the case back for further consideration," Black said.

The RIAA's response to Napster's legal brief filed on August 18 is due Sept. 8. The RIAA had no immediate comment on Monday regarding the briefs filed in support to Napster. Napster is due to file a reply on Sept. 12. After that, the appeals court will schedule a second hearing on the RIAA's motion for a preliminary injunction.

The 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco said Tuesday opening arguments in the case against music-swapping service Napster Inc. will begin on October 2.

The lawsuit filed by the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) wants Napster shut down, alleging it is facilitating widespread illegal copying of digitally compressed music files. Some of the recording companies playing a major role in the trial include Sony Music, A&M Records, Universal Music, EMI and the Warner Music Group.

Napster contends not all the music listeners are sharing is illegal, that it is just a distribution vehicle and that it is not responsible for policing what files can be legally shared.

The 9th Circuit court temporarily halted a federal judge’s order in July effectively shutting down Napster, which has over 20 million users. U.S. District Judge Marilyn Hall Patel ordered on July 26 that Napster prevent users from trading copyrighted songs, saying "Napster wrote the software, it’s up to them to write software that will remove from users the ability to copy copyrighted material. They created a monster ... that’s the consequence they face."

A three-judge panel will hear the case, but the exact judges have not yet been named.

As the court’s announcement came down, a number of special interest groups filed friend-of-the-court briefs urging the court to allow Napster to continue operations.

The Consumer Electronics Association, representing 600 members including America Online Inc., Apple and Microsoft Corp., told the court that shutting down Napster would threaten development in consumer technology and that Judge Patel’s initial finding could establish a damaging precedent that could threaten American’s rights to make private, non-commercial recordings in their homes.

The Computer & Communications Industry Association (CCIA), took a different approach in its brief filing, saying the court needs to revise much of the intellectual property law which applies to the Napster case.

CCIA includes members such as Verizon Communications, Quest Communications Corp., AT&T Corp., Hitachi Data Systems Inc., Oracle Corp., Sun Microsystems Inc. and Yahoo Inc.

Officials at Napster are hoping a legal settlement can be reached before the trial gets underway. Record industry leaders say the chances of that are slim, saying file-sharing is a clear threat to the way in which they operate and make money.

High Court Decision On Microsoft Appeal Deferred For Now

A possible decision by the U.S. Supreme Court on whether it will hear the landmark antitrust case against Microsoft Corp. came and went Monday setting the stage for a ruling sometime on or after September 8.

As scheduled, the justices released a list of orders on upcoming cases, but

did not address a Justice Department request for the court to hear the case instead of sending it for appeal to a lower court, as Microsoft had requested.

Normally the high court doesn’t decide on if it will hear appeals until it returns from a summer recess at the end of September, but being that the federal government is requesting the high court move quickly in the interest of the national economy, the justices could issue a decision more quickly.

Microsoft urged the Supreme Court on August 22 to let a federal appeals court hear its appeal of antitrust violations to ensure there is a thorough review of the facts.

"The benefits of comprehensive review by the court of appeals far outweigh whatever time, if any, might be saved by direct review in this court," Microsoft’s lawyers said in a brief filed with the court. "The need for soundness in the result outweighs the need for speed in reaching it. The Court should exercise its discretion to deny these direct appeals and remand the case to the court of appeals."

District court Judge Thomas Penfield Jackson found in June that Microsoft broke antitrust law by using its monopolistic hold on the Windows operating system to stifle competition and ordered the company be split in two.

Calif. Judge OKs Class-Action Suit vs. Microsoft

A California judge allowed a class action suit to proceed against Microsoft Corp., the first such case to go to trial over charges that the software giant harmed consumers through its alleged monopolistic practices.

‘‘Given California law, this ruling was not unexpected," Microsoft spokesman Jim Cullinan told Reuters after Superior Court Judge Stuart Pollack approved the suit. ‘‘This is just the first step in a very long process."

The suit, one of a number of such cases in various state and federal courts around the country, alleges that Microsoft used its dominant market position to overcharge California consumers for a number of products, including Windows and Word programs.

Microsoft has recently asked another federal judge to dismiss or consolidate the class actions suits against it, many of which were filed after U.S. District Court Judge Thomas Penfield Jackson found that Microsoft violated federal anti-trust laws and ordered the company split into two. Microsoft has appealed that ruling.

Cullinan said Microsoft was confident that the California case would ultimately demonstrate that, through its size and the scope of its offerings, it has served its customers well. "We believe that in the end of the day it will be shown that far from harming consumers, the conduct at issue will be shown to benefit consumers," he said Tuesday.

Computer Giants Unite on Lab

The community of mostly volunteer programmers that has built Linux into a formidable operating system is getting some help from computer industry giants.

International Business Machines Inc., Intel Corp., Hewlett-Packard Co. and NEC Corp. are announcing Wednesday that they will create a laboratory with an investment of several million dollars where programmers can test Linux software on the large computer systems that are common in the corporate world.

The lab is expected to open by the end of the year near Portland, Ore.

Linux is an ‘‘open source" operating system that anyone can modify, as long as the modifications are made available for free on the Internet. It has a devoted following among programmers, who collaborate on software projects over the Web. These software engineers can usually only test software on their own desktop computers, part of the reason Linux is now rarely used on larger computers.

‘‘The Open Source Development Lab will help fulfill a need that individual Linux and open source developers often have: access to high-end enterprise hardware," said Brian Behlendorf, creator of the open source Web server software Apache.

Irving Wladawsky-Berger, the head of IBM’s Linux group, said the lab would help companies run hardware from different vendors together, as well as let run ‘‘clusters" of computers working as one.

The four main sponsors said they will contribute several millions of dollars to the project.

The lab is also backed by smaller companies that specialize in Linux products, like Red Hat Inc., Turbolinux Inc., Linuxcare Inc. and VA Linux Systems Inc., as well as Dell Computer Corp. and Silicon Graphics Inc.

The founding companies said the lab will be run by a nonprofit organization that will select the software projects that gain access to the lab in an ‘‘open, neutral process."

Linux is seen as an alternative to proprietary operating systems like Microsoft’s Windows and Apple OS. Its backers say the publicly available source code, or software blueprint, makes it more flexible and reliable.

Analyst Bill Claybrook at Aberdeen Group said the project sponsors are backing Linux because it gives them a chance to influence an operating system for their computers.

‘‘These companies see that they can play a much more important role in developing Linux than they can in, let’s say Windows, because Microsoft pretty much decides what to put in Windows," he said.

Microsoft Starts Charge on AOL with New Software

Microsoft Corp is issuing an improved version of a new Web browser that blends in video and music capability and content from its MSN Internet service, in what is the opening shot in the software giant’s biggest

assault yet on Internet rival America Online Inc.

A new and improved test, or beta, version of the browser, now called ‘‘MSN Explorer", is to be released on Thursday, Deanna Sanford, lead product manager for MSN, said in an interview at Microsoft’s Redmond, Wash., headquarters.

The software is the first of a series of steps Microsoft is taking this fall to beef up every aspect of MSN, Sanford said.

Known internally as ‘‘MSN 2001", the project will remake the look and content of sites like finance page MoneyCentral and music and movies portal WindowsMedia.com, and fine-tune the process of getting subscribers online, Sanford said.

‘‘It’s a really big time for MSN," she said. ‘‘MSN.com will have significant upgrades this fall. For the first time it will signify that there’s a clear alternative to AOL."

Microsoft, which fumbled its early attempts at building an Internet business, has won increasing praise from analysts and users for improving those services, which are now one of the fastest-growing parts of the company.

Microsoft’s Internet sites appeared among the top three Web and digital media properties in six countries, while rivals AOL and portal Yahoo! Inc placed in the top three in five countries, according to a Media Metrix Internet usage report for May.

Microsoft’s MSN.com portal includes news site MSNBC.com, automobile buying service CarPoint, travel site Expedia, MoneyCentral and WindowsMedia, among others.

Although subscribers to the MSN Internet access service are about one-fifth of AOL’s 22 million customers, Sanford said that business was growing strongly.

Microsoft would also roll-out broadband, or high-speed, Internet access soon, Sanford said.

She declined to give details, but noted that MSN had several options. Microsoft has experimented with DSL service, which gives fast, always-on Web access over regular telephone lines, but also has strong ties to the cable and satellite industries, which offer alternative high-speed on-ramps to the Internet.

‘‘We’ve had things going on with broadband for several months, and this fall we are going to bring it all together," Sanford said. ‘‘The important thing is giving customers high-speed access."

Meanwhile, users interested in getting a hint of what lies down the road can download the MSN Explorer from MSN.com or Microsoft’s Web site.

Among the key improvements in MSN Explorer is the ability to customize functions so that, for example, a user who doesn’t care for sports news can replace that icon with one that links to an entertainment page, Sanford said.

It is also easier on Web novices. For example, if someone tries to type an e-mail address in the Web browser instead of opening an e-mail program

(something Sanford said new users frequently do), the browser will realize that the user is trying to write a message and will launch the e-mail program for them.

‘‘If that’s the way people want to do it, we should make it work," Sanford said.

The software also softens the utilitarian feel of Microsoft’s Internet Explorer Web browser, using pastel colors and cartoonish icons. It also boasts a built-in media player so users can continue to surf the Web or work online while watching a video news clip or listening to a song.

Sony Launches Handheld Computer

Sony Corp. announced plans Wednesday to launch next month a handheld computer that uses Palm Inc.’s operating system and offers some entertainment features.

The choice of operating system represents a win for market leader Palm in its struggle to keep devices running Microsoft’s Pocket PC operating system from breaking into the market.

The CLIE, an acronym for ‘‘Communication Link Information Entertainment" (pronounced CLEE-ay), will cost about $400, about the same as Palm’s high-end Palm Vx.

Sony aimed to widen the market for Palm handhelds beyond mobile professionals and tech-friendly ‘‘early adopters" by including multimedia and entertainment features, said Palm executive Mark Bercow.

The multimedia capabilities of the first Sony handheld are relatively modest, however. It can show pictures and small video clips on its monochrome screen, but cannot play sounds.

Sony had earlier said it would bring out a handheld with a color screen.

Sony spokesman David Yang said parts shortages had forced a change in plans, and that a color handheld can be expected in the middle of next year.

Palm has previously played down the multimedia capabilities of the rival Pocket PC devices, saying customers wanted a simple device that does a good job of handling basic organizer functions like calendars and address books.

Most of the Pocket PC devices made by Compaq, Casio and Hewlett-Packard come with color screens that can play movie clips, sound jacks for digital music, and expansion slots for accessories. Palm also makes a model with a color screen.

The CLIE will have the same amount of internal memory as the Palm Vx, 8 megabytes, but will also come with an 8-megabyte Memory Stick, a storage device that can be used to transfer data between the CLIE, digital video and still cameras and personal computers.

The CLIE weighs 4 ounces, and is about the size of a small TV remote. It is slightly thicker and longer and narrower than the Vx.

The Palm operating system has also been licensed by Handspring Inc. for its line of Visor handhelds. Similar to Palms, they add an expansion slot for accessories.

Palm and Handspring have sold 7 million handhelds, giving the Palm operating system a 66 percent share of the worldwide market for handheld computers.

Glitch Prompts Intel To Recall 1.13-GHz Pentiums

Intel has recalled its fastest chip--the 1.13-GHz Pentium III--saying the chip could cause system errors when running certain programs and at a particular temperature.

The problem is with certain circuits of the chip that have been shown to malfunction in laboratory tests under certain conditions, said Intel spokesman Howard High. Intel said it has not received reports from customers of any problems, but the glitch has been noted by some hardware review sites in recent days.

As first reported by CNET News.com, Dell Computer and IBM have stopped shipping PCs with the processor. Intel said it will work with those companies to satisfy existing customers.

"Clearly if they want a replacement, then we will replace (it)," High said. "If they want a refund, we'll accommodate them."

The 1.13-GHz chip began shipping July 31 in limited quantities.

Intel would not say exactly how many 1.13 GHz chips have shipped, but analysts said the number is quite small.

"There can't be very many--tens of thousands at most," said Linley Gwennap, principal analyst at The Linley Group. "I wouldn't be surprised if it was under 10,000."

Word of the glitch comes on the same day as rival Advanced Micro Devices announced shipments of its 1.1-GHz Athlon.

Analysts say competition with AMD may have caused Intel to release a chip that wasn't ready.

"It sounds like Intel may have pushed a little too hard," said chip analyst Peter Glaskowsky of MicroDesign Resources. "It shows the Pentium III is not really capable of reaching these levels."

Gwennap noted that Intel did not originally have the 1.13-GHz chip on its road map and has struggled to produce the 1-GHz chip in enough quantity to satisfy customers.

"When you push the clock speed beyond what it was designed to do, you run into problems," Gwennap said. "They rushed to get the 1-GHz chip out, and they couldn't produce enough of them."

Intel said it has identified the cause of the problem and will fix it by redesigning the circuits in question.

"It’s probably a couple of months before we get units back into the marketplace," High said.

Although other Pentium III processors have the same design, Intel said it has not found the same problem in other chips.

"We’ve done quite a bit of testing, and we haven’t seen anything," High said.

Intel said the fact that it had not shipped many of the processors will make the problem easier to remedy than past glitches, such as the bug with the 820 chipset. In that case, computer motherboards with the defective chipset were sold through distributors and available in computers from many retailers.

"We’re kind of early in the process, which is a benefit with something like this," High said.

Only Dell, IBM and a few European companies had been selling systems with the 1.13-GHz chip. Intel said it is recalling chips that have not yet been sold and has halted its shipments of the processor.

High said various computer hardware review sites began noting a problem with certain kernels of the Linux operating system. Intel at first could replicate the problem only when the chips were operated outside recommended temperature specifications. Over the weekend, it began noticing problems even within the chip’s specifications.

Intel executives said it was too soon to say how much the bug might cost, but the cost will not be material to Intel’s earnings.

In addition to the glitch that forced the recall of the 820 and the delay of the low-end Timna chip, Intel has had delays and performance issues with its forthcoming Itanium chip, which is aimed at high-end servers.

Gwennap noted that Intel’s manufacturing woes over the past year--and AMD’s success--reverse what had been the trend.

"For a long time, Intel was this machine that couldn’t break and AMD couldn’t take two steps without tripping," Gwennap said. "For the past year, Intel has been having problem after problem, and AMD keeps cranking out more and more chips."

Gwennap said that while the Pentium III may have hit its limit, Intel will be able to introduce chips at much faster speeds when it debuts the Pentium 4 later this year.

The Pentium 4 design "clearly allows higher clock speeds," Gwennap said. "That’s one of the reasons they are moving to a new architecture."

Destructive Palm Program Discovered

Antivirus experts are warning consumers about the first intentionally destructive program for Palm handheld computers: it appears as an update to a Palm program, but instead deletes all programs on the device.

The author of the program says he didn’t mean for it to go public and that

he’s helping antivirus companies detect it.

The program, a type known as a Trojan horse, has been dubbed "Palm.Liberty.A." Liberty is a popular Palm program, made by Gambit Studios, that lets users download and play games made for the Nintendo GameBoy handheld computer.

Liberty is distributed as a ‘‘shareware" program, meaning that users are expected to try the program out and, if they like it, pay for a full-featured version. But as with many shareware programs, hackers have developed ‘‘crack" downloads that allow software pirates to use the full version without payment.

Palm.Liberty.A is being distributed under the name ‘‘Crack 1.1" through Internet Relay Chat, a network of chatting channels. When run, it deletes all the programs on the user’s Palm device, though it leaves the address book data, calendar and other databases intact.

Antivirus companies said they have not received any infection reports. But it is fairly easy for a hacker to modify the program and re-release it in a more dangerous form, similar to the many versions of the ‘‘Love Bug" virus that have come out since the first outbreak.

‘‘It will definitely get attention," said Vincent Weafer, director of Symantec Corp.’s Anti-Virus Research Center in Cupertino, Calif. ‘‘I believe we’ve opened a Pandora’s Box on some handheld devices."

Palm.Liberty.A affects Palm handheld computers and the Handspring Visor computers, which use the same operating system. It can be downloaded from a desktop computer or transmitted through the device’s infrared communications port. Several virus companies offer software that detects and removes the program.

The person who wrote the program was also one of the developers of Liberty.

‘‘The whole purpose of my research was to investigate anti-cracking, and assist developers stop cracking," said Aaron Ardiri, a Swedish software developer who also teaches at the University of Gavle in Sweden. ‘‘It is nothing about being malicious to the hacker."

Ardiri said he created the program to sweep off unwanted programs without harming a user’s data, and he gave an early version to several of his friends. He said he decided not to release it because it might cause harm, but he said a friend posted it on an Internet Relay Chat channel without his knowledge.

Now it has found its way to Web sites. Ardiri has given a program to antivirus companies that detects Palm.Liberty.A and has tried other means to head off an outbreak since it was released last Thursday evening.

‘‘They’re still distributing the file, and I can’t get them to stop it. I’m trying to do everything to stop this thing," he said. ‘‘I don’t know what to do, I’ve come to a dead end. I’m just waiting for the dust to settle."

Word Documents Susceptible to "Web Bug" Infestation

Microsoft is weathering complaints that documents created with Microsoft

Word and some of its other popular desktop applications can be embedded with electronic surveillance tags allowing document authors to track their use.

The Privacy Foundation, an Internet privacy research institute run by the University of Denver, today published a report demonstrating how Word documents can be planted with "Web bugs" that can pass information about the use of the file back to the author. Web bugs can also be embedded in Excel spreadsheets and PowerPoint slide show files, according to the report, which was authored by Privacy Foundation chief technology officer Richard Smith.

"What this means basically is that if an author of a document for whatever reason cares about who is reading it, he can bug it and then monitor it," Smith said. "They can find out the IP address and host name of whoever is reading the document."

A Web bug works by planting a Web address into a document. The bugs can take up just a single pixel on a computer screen, making them invisible to a viewer.

Smith said that at this point, he knows of no instances in which documents are being bugged in this way, but he described a number of scenarios in which it could be used. Companies might embed bugs into confidential documents to detect leaks or to determine copyright infringement, for example.

Microsoft product manager Lisa Gurry downplayed the Privacy Foundation’s discovery, saying that such capabilities exist for all Web-based applications and have for some time.

"We actually believe this is much ado about not much," Gurry said. "There is no evidence that anyone is exploiting that to potentially try and manage cookies through Word documents."

Gurry added that people can prevent this scenario by disabling the cookie feature on their Web browsers.

The surveillance method described by Smith is possible because Word allows authors to embed image locations rather than actual images as a space-saving move. As the document communicates with the remote server where the image sits, the author can monitor where the document goes and how often it is opened.

Cutting and pasting portions of Word documents into other files could also transfer the bugs.

Smith also raised the specter of Word Web bugs reading and writing Internet Explorer browser cookies.

"Cookies could allow an author to match up the computer viewer of a Word document to their visits to the author’s Web site," Smith warned in the advisory.

Marketers have long used Web bugs to track the whereabouts of Internet users and to track whether email messages are opened and read, according to Smith. The ability to embed Web bugs into Microsoft Word, Excel and PowerPoint documents adds the possibility of tracking an array of file formats.

"You sort of get on this slippery slope, adding Internet capabilities into offline file formats," Smith said. "There's some talk of embedding HTML files into MP3 files."

While there may be talk, Smith could not cite any examples of such tracking on MP3 files or Microsoft Word files.

One security analyst questioned whether the Web bug should be thought of as a bug or as a legitimate feature prone to abuse.

"The problem is that it's often possible to take well-meaning features such as this linking and use them for less honorable purposes such as the monitoring of user activity for copyright enforcement or marketing purposes," wrote SecurityFocus.com analyst Elias Levy. "The feature itself is agnostic; it's how you put it to use that becomes an issue."

Levy said Microsoft could respond in one of two ways: disabling the feature entirely, or letting consumers decide when it can be used.

"The latter would entail modifying Word to warn the user when an embedded link is in the document, similarly to how it warns users of embedded macros, or like Internet Explorer can warn users of cookies," Levy wrote.

In his advisory, Smith recommended that Web browser cookies be disabled within Word documents and other non-browser applications, but he stopped short of calling for Microsoft to remove the Web bug capabilities. He recommended that concerned consumers use personal firewall software to monitor when "unauthorized" programs like Word are accessing the Internet.

Online Auctions Spark Most Fraud Complaints

Online auctions by far have sparked the largest number of complaints to a new U.S. government office tracking fraud on the Internet, the Federal Bureau of Investigation said Tuesday.

Releasing the first breakdown of its kind from the Internet Fraud Complaint Center, the FBI said online auctions accounted for 48.8 percent of complaints followed by non-delivery of goods ordered online, at 19.2 percent.

The center, jointly run by the FBI and the Justice Department's National White Collar Crime Center, has been receiving an average of 1,000 complaints a week since it opened in May, FBI spokeswoman Jule Miller said.

She said other top fraud complaints to the center involved securities and commodities, 16.9 percent; credit cards, 4.8 percent; identity theft, 2.9 percent; business opportunities, 2.5 percent.

The remainder involved in declining order professional services, 1.2 percent; travel ‘‘scams", 0.3 percent; ‘‘Ponzi" pyramid schemes, 0.3 percent; and check fraud, 0.1 percent, Miller said.

The FBI said about 4,000 complaints had been referred to law-enforcement agencies by the complaint center, which is located in Morgantown, West VA., and at http://www.ifccfbi.gov.

USATODAY, the first to report the findings, said Richard Johnson, the

center’s director, was asking Congress to double his office’s budget to $18 million next year.

U.S. Online Users Shun ’.us’ Names

Americans, it seems, prefer any other identity but their own.

Internet addresses tagged with a country code - such as ‘‘name.fr" for France - may be a source of national pride around the world, but ".us" is this country’s forgotten stepchild.

And that worries the U.S. government, which last week began seeking suggestions on making ".us" more desirable to help relieve the crowded field of dot-com addresses.

Good luck.

Changing habits won’t be easy in a country used to ending addresses with ".com," ".net" and ".org," which are supposed to be global identifiers but are dominated by U.S. sites.

Roger Cochetti, a senior vice president at Network Solutions Inc., said the popularity of the global suffixes reflect Americans’ vision of the Net as an international medium.

‘‘They are equally comfortable examining museums in France or Greece as they are online museums in the United States," he said. ‘‘They are equally comfortable doing research on a British Web site or a Canadian Web site."

Some groups and businesses even prefer other countries’ abbreviations - such as ".tv" for Tuvalu and ".md" for Moldova. The use of ".us" is largely limited to local government agencies, schools and community groups, even though it is open to any U.S. site.

Even the U.S. Postal Service doesn’t want it anymore. Though the post office once considered claiming ".us" for customers, postal spokeswoman Sue Brennan said the agency will now concentrate on assigning e-mail addresses through ‘‘usps.com." It became a dot-com this year, dropping allegiances to ".gov" for government.

The ".us" suffix is one of 244 assigned to countries and territories worldwide. It is such a source of identity that Palestinians recently obtained ".ps" and the European Union wants ".eu" to unify European businesses.

The Commerce Department believes the ".us" real estate is underpopulated because of the way such addresses are assigned.

A Los Angeles business that sells clothing is thus supposed to register under ‘‘clothingstore.los-angeles.ca.us" rather than simply ‘‘clothingstore.us."

It’s difficult to remember such a long name. It’s also difficult to figure out who assigns it, since such assignments are delegated to some 800 individuals and organizations.

So Americans have gravitated instead to ".com," ".net" and ".org,"

which are registered through Network Solutions and other companies heavily promoting the ease of doing so.

Under the Commerce Department proposal, a new administrator would replace the University of Southern California's Information Sciences Institute - where Internet domain pioneer Jon Postel worked until his 1998 death - as master keeper of the ".us" domains.

Experts believe such a designated organization or company would be able to market ".us" to commercial entities more effectively.

The proposal comes as simple dot-com names become harder to obtain.

It is separate from a plan to add a half-dozen or so new global suffixes, such as ".movie" and ".shop," by early next year to relieve some of the dot-com overcrowding.

Michael Sondow, who runs an online forum for individuals, nonprofit groups and smaller businesses, fears that ".us" will ''turn into another commodity to be exploited by craven registrars and their greedy clients."

''Everyone had hoped that the .us would be reorganized as sort of a refuge for the person, noncommercial, nonprofit sector," he said.

Commerce officials offered few details but several questions for the Internet community, including whether to keep the structure tied to locality and whether to reserve some names for personal, noncommercial use.

Revamping ".us" has been under discussions for at least two years. The Commerce Department did not say when it would make a final ruling.

The Best Job Strategy? Get Laid Off

Dotcom unemployment surging? No problem -- put it on your resume and watch the offers flow in, says one employment firm.

Job losses at dotcoms surged 55 percent in July -- the third straight month of increasing carnage in the battered Internet sector -- but don't start crying for those axed employees just yet.

John Challenger, of employment agency Challenger, Gray & Christmas, said that getting laid off from an Internet startup is actually a career builder, not a career killer -- something to add to the resume, not hide.

His company reported Friday morning that 170 dotcoms have either failed, or trimmed their staffs, this year. The hardest hit has been the retail sector, which has slashed more than 3,500 employees since January.

Service-related Web companies were a distance second with 2,339 job losses.

Some of the biggest names to announce layoffs this year were APBNews.com, Nickelodeon's e-tailer Red Rocket and the Digital Entertainment Network.

But most of the pink-slipped pros don't stay out of work too long, said Challenger -- a sign that the Internet bubble may be softening, but that the job picture is still growing.

In fact, getting laid off from a dotcom-turned-dotbomb is actually a plus for prospective employers, Challenger said in a prepared statement.

"Workers are even more hirable after having worked in a firm that struggled or did not make it. Prospective employers see it as a valuable learning experience," Challenger said.

According to some surveys, the tech-job outlook right now is supernova bright, with some 1.6 million job openings available in the IT sector worldwide.

Employers believe that with the current workforce shortage, they will only be able to fill half those slots this year.

The U.S. Department of Labor reported that there is still virtual unemployment in Silicon Valley -- a scant 1.8 percent that may be comprised of employees shuttling between jobs.

The department writes, "Recent news of dotcom downsizing because of cautious or dwindling investment has not stemmed the demand for high-tech labor."

Kent Kelderman, group vice president of Earthweb Career Solutions, which runs IT employment service Dice.com, calls the ongoing layoff picture "a blip."

"There are isolated cases where you see some extreme numbers, and people will always react to that," he said.

The retail sector leading in layoffs is to be expected, he said.

"Retail shops got into it in the greatest numbers," he said. "Every major company had to have a Web site. They ramped up the quickest. But now their business models don’t make as much sense."

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